

Text: Revelation 6

Title: "The Day of Wrath Shall Come"

Time: 7/23/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Shortly after the imprisonment of John the Baptist by Herod, Jesus returned to Galilee to embark on a preaching ministry in the synagogues of that region in the north of Palestine. Luke tells us of a day when He preached in His hometown of Nazareth and His text was Isaiah 61:1-2.

Jesus read the text up to a certain point in verse 2. He read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Then He sat down and explained that this text found fulfillment in His ministry that day to the people of His home town.

What is instructive to us this morning in our study of Revelation 6 is the phrase at the end of Isaiah 61:2, which Jesus stopped short of: "and the day of vengeance of our God." He did not include that part of the verse because His first coming was not intended to fulfill that part of the verse.

God's plan for mankind includes (1) "an acceptable year of the Lord," and (2) "a day of vengeance of our God." The Messiah, the Anointed One, Jesus Christ, brings both to us, the first at His first coming, and the second at His second coming. Today, we live in the acceptable year of the Lord, but the day of vengeance of our God is coming. It is a day that will end the acceptable year, but also one that will begin the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

Much of the Old Testament spoke of this day as “the Day of the Lord.” Isaiah 2 describes this coming day in some detail. This day of the Lord is the day that Revelation 6 begins to describe in terms of the opening of the scroll of final judgment (vv. 16-17). I want us to see four things from our Revelation passage about this day of wrath that shall come.

I. The day of wrath will come when the Lamb says so (vv. 1-8; the Lamb opens the seals).

III: Shi’ite Islamic eschatology teaches that in the 9th century the 12th Imam was born who shall someday rule the world. His name is Muhammed Al-Mahdi, and he has lived among Muslims for over a thousand years now, but his identity has been hidden. Certain powerful groups within that form of Islam believe that they need to hasten the reappearance of Mahdi by plunging the world into chaos and war. One of the problems this form of Islam has to deal with is that a lot of people have claimed to be the Mahdi reappearing. I saw one report that said that in 2012, Iran had an estimated 3000 Mahdi-claimants in their prisons.

Appl: Well, what Shi’ite Islam hopes for as a coming Imam, the Bible warns against as the antichrist. The opening of each of the first four seals in our chapter pictures a man on a horse, and each of those pictures symbolizes the rise of someone New Testament prophecy calls the man of sin, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3), and antichrist (1 John 2:18).

But notice how his rise comes about. *It happens when the Lamb opens the seal of the book, not before.* It happens when the four living beings issue the command to come. When it comes to even the rise of antichrist at the beginning of the day of the Lord, it is the Lamb who is in control. The day of wrath will come when the Lamb says so.

Appl2: Now remember that this word for *Lamb* means *little-lamb*. Have you ever thought of a little-lamb as wrathful? There is something incongruous about this metaphor. The Bible speaks of the judgment of Jehovah's wrath as His strange or foreign work. "For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act" (Isa. 28:21).

There is something strange about the wrath of the Lamb, something about wrath that is foreign to the nature of the Lamb. I am reminded by this truth that what makes this final Judge the Lamb is the fact that He first bore the wrath of God Himself in our behalf on the cross of Calvary for our sins. Being helplessly sacrificed in our place for our forgiveness made Him the Lamb. That is His normal work - to save the sinner through His atoning death and resurrection.

But His wrath is very real for those who refuse His forgiveness, even though it is His strange work. The day of wrath will come when the Lamb says so.

II. The day of wrath will come featuring both death and Hades (vv. 1-8).

III: I spoke to a friend a couple of weeks ago who mentioned that addicts find peace only in their death. It was striking to me how different that belief is from the gospel, which says that we can have peace with God through new life in Christ. Death is our enemy, not the bringer of peace.

Appl: There are many forms of death being inflicted on the inhabitants of the earth in these first four seals. The anti-christ consolidates his political power over the nations

through war and conquest (first seal). This conquest involves world war and much bloodshed (second seal). Inflation results and prices on food staples are fixed by this new ruler, but that further diminishes food supply and famine results (third seal). And finally various forms of physical death are experienced by many. One fourth of the population of earth dies during this time (fourth seal).

But these dying men and women do not find peace when they die. They find instead that *Hades follows death* (v. 8). In the New Testament, Hades is the opposite of Heaven (Matt. 11:23). It is a place of conscious torment experienced by unrepentant sinners after they die (Luke 16:23).

Jesus has the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:8), and so its gates will not overpower the church that Jesus is building (Matt. 16:18). Death puts unbelieving sinners in Hades. Jesus is the Savior from death and Hades. Is He your Savior this morning? Do you have assurance that you will be with Him in Paradise after death, rather than in Hades? The day of wrath will come, featuring both death and Hades.

III. The day of wrath will come bringing justice to Christian martyrs (vv. 9-11).

III: God brought the Protestant Reformation to Scotland in the 1560's through leaders like John Knox and the martyrs who preceded him, Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart.

In the 1630's the English king sought to reintroduce Catholicism to Scotland. In 1637 at St. Giles Church in Edinburgh, a prelate came for the first time from England to read from the new prayer book that was to be imposed upon these Presbyterians.

A milk maid, Jenny Geddes, lost her cool when that started, and picking up the milking stool she had brought to the service with her, she hurled it at the head of the visiting minister shouting, "Wilt thou say mass at my lugs [ears]!"

The riot that ensued led a year later to a document remembered today as the Scottish National Covenant and the beginning of an arduous struggle of the Scottish Covenanters for religious freedom. Some eighteen-thousand martyrs lost their lives in those days in an effort to be free from the tyranny of Roman Catholicism. In doing so, they fulfilled the covenant that they had sworn, which read in part:

"And because we perceive, that the quietness and stability of our religion and kirk [church] doth depend upon the safety and good behavior of the King's Majesty, as upon a comfortable instrument of God's mercy granted to this country, for the maintaining of his kirk, and ministration of justice amongst us; we protest and promise with our hearts, under the same oath, hand-writ, and pains, that we shall defend his person and authority with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defense of Christ, his evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory eternally. Amen."

Appl: There are some Scottish Covenanters represented under the altar as martyrs crying for justice in this fifth-seal vision. They stood for the word of God and had a testimony for Christ, and for that reason they were killed by those who hate the Savior. We read of another from Bangladesh who is there last Wednesday night at prayer meeting.

We are told that their souls were seen by John under the altar, or the place of sacrifice. I believe this is the altar that the author of Hebrews spoke of, the one where Jesus suffered for our sins outside the camp (Heb. 13:10-13). Under the cross these martyrs are given rest and a white robe representing their victory assured.

Their justice awaits the completion of their number – we are their fellow-servants; we may be called upon to be their brethren who make the same sacrifice as they did. We come each Sunday morning and worship before the place of sacrifice (the cross). Are we living lives that are living sacrifices? Are we living our lives as the martyrs did under the altar did? Have we taken up our cross to follow our Lord? If not, can we expect to be ready to die as these, our fellow-servants and brothers and sisters, have died? The One who lived and died for us is worth living for and dying for. Stop living for self.

IV. The day of wrath will come leveling the pride of earth (vv. 12-17).

Appl: The richest king who ever lived wrote in Prov. 11:4, “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.” This sixth seal will involve an earthquake and a meteor shower that causes not only the mountains and islands to be removed, but also the great men in the earth.

The judgment of God is the great equalizer. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). For these experiencing the day of wrath that shall come, there is one thing worse even than death – the face of Him that sits on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb.

Conclusion: Verse 17 asks, “The day of wrath has come, *who shall stand?*” The answer to that question then will be “no one, for it is too late.”

This morning’s message is not “the day of wrath *has come,*” but “the day of wrath *shall come.*”

If we ask, “The day of wrath shall come, who shall stand?” the answer is “those who believe on the worthy Lamb while they still have the time.” This is the acceptable year of the Lord. The day of vengeance of our God has not yet come. But the day of wrath shall come. Will you be able to stand safe in Christ?

I am reminded that each of the first four seals are called for by the command of the seraphim, “Come!” It will be the beginning of a terrible day of vengeance of our God when that call is heard.

But today heaven heralds a different call – same word, but a different purpose: “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say, ‘Come.’ And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:16-17).

Knowing that the day of wrath shall come, we need to come now for life, and we need to tell others to come too.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*